



EXHIBIT 7  
DATE 3.26.07  
HB 700

Story available at <http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/03/11/opinion/letters/40-youth.txt>

Published on Sunday, March 11, 2007.

Last modified on 3/11/2007 at 1:30 am

## Letter: Disabled youth need college opportunities

According to the last U.S. Census, 142,229 of the people between the ages of 5 and 65 residing in the state of Montana are disabled. That is approximately 16.7 percent of the state's total population. While today more disabled students are attempting to enter college and employment communities, the odds are stacked against them. According to the National Organization on Disability, only 11 percent of the students with disabilities graduate from college versus 23 percent without. An even more sobering statistic is that 55 percent of students with disabilities will be unemployed after graduation versus 14 percent of students without disabilities. These numbers are staggering and frightening.

State Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy has sponsored a bill to provide funding for Montana Youth Leadership Forum to design and sponsor a college program for disabled students. That forum will help bridge the gaps disabled students face in the education and employment arenas. The forum will educate disabled students in the areas of transitioning from the college and home settings to living independently, resume writing, ADA and self advocacy in attaining their goals, job searching and interviewing and much more.

HB700 has stalled in the House Committee on education. I ask all concerned citizens to contact the members of this committee and urge them to pass this important bill.

*Sandra L. Macauley*  
*Havre*

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